



# Environmental Bulletin

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*from the Savannah River Site*

## Site initiative receives national recognition



The team pictured from left from left, Richard Rustad and Brian Hennessey, DOE, Savannah River Operations Office, Bart Marcy and John Sessions, WSRC and Ambrose Schwallie, WSRC president. (Bruce Boulineau Photo/98-1288-1)

The Savannah River Site (SRS) recently received the NEPA Presidential Excellence Award for integrating National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) processes at the site.

The National Association of Environmental Professionals recognized the WSRC/DOE team of Bart Marcy, John Sessions, Richard Rustad and Brian Hennessey for developing a Integration Guidance document that complies with both NEPA and CERCLA regulatory requirements.

The Integration Guidance combines public participation processes, eliminates redundant environmental sampling and impacts analysis and reduces document preparation efforts. That cuts the time and cost for developing NEPA documentation in half where a CERCLA action is involved.

## Environmental Impact Statements for Tritium delayed

The final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Accelerator for the Production of Tritium (APT) and Tritium Extraction Facility (TEF) have been delayed. DOE Secretary-Designate Bill Richardson has committed to a decision on the primary technology (APT or Commercial Light Water Reactor [CLWR]) by the end of 1998. Once that decision is made, the final EISs will be released; and later, a Record of Decision will be issued. The Department of Energy released the APT Draft EIS in December 1997 and the TEF Draft EIS in May 1998.

Tritium is an essential ingredient in U.S. nuclear weapons. Because tritium decays at the rate of five percent per year, it must be replenished periodically for weapons to operate as designed. The United States has not produced tritium since 1988 when the last tritium production reactor was shut down at Savannah River Site (SRS). Since

that time, tritium requirements have been met through the use of recycled gas from retired weapons.

For the past several years the Department has been evaluating ways to produce tritium. Following the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Department took its first step toward a solution with the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for Tritium Supply and Recycling, which evaluated both the need for a new tritium source and the alternatives to provide that source. The Record of Decision (ROD) for that PEIS announced that the Department would pursue a dual-track approach. One approach the Department is considering is an accelerator for the production of tritium. The second approach being considered is to initiate the purchase of an existing commercial

reactor (operating or partially complete) for conversion to a defense facility or the purchase of irradiation services with an option to purchase the reactor. The ROD also stated that if the accelerator was chosen it would be built at the Savannah River Site and a tritium extraction facility would be built at SRS.

The Department is preparing three environmental impact statements related to the PEIS: (1) an EIS on the use of specific commercial light water reactors to produce tritium, (2) an EIS on the construction and operation of an accelerator to produce tritium, and (3) an EIS on the construction and operation of the Tritium Extraction Facility at SRS. The Commercial Light Water Reactor Draft EIS was released in early August 1998.

For copies of these drafts, call 1-800-881-7292 or email [nepa@srs.gov](mailto:nepa@srs.gov).

## Revised draft order on radioactive waste management out for public review

The Department of Energy (DOE) has released draft directives for public comment. These directives revise the requirements that DOE and its contractors must follow in managing radioactive waste to protect workers, the public, and the environment from radiological exposures. The existing order is being revised to reflect advances in radioactive waste management practices and changes within DOE since the existing order was issued in 1988.

The scope of the draft revised DOE directives on radioactive waste management includes:

- high-level waste management, including closure of high-level waste tank systems and management of associated incidental wastes;
- transuranic (TRU) waste management including safe treatment, storage and characterization/certification to support disposal at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP);
- low-level waste management with attention to disposal and assessment of potential long-term impacts on projected public dose; and
- the management of the radioactive component of mixed waste to comply with external regulations, including the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), which regulates the management of the hazardous component of mixed wastes.

Under the Draft Order 435.1, DOE Headquarters will:

- establish and implement complex-wide Radioactive Waste Management Programs and Plans for high level, low level, and transuranic wastes;
- establish and maintain a complex-wide radioactive waste management data system; and
- review and approve performance assessments and composite analyses for low-level waste (LLW) disposal facilities and issues disposal authorization statements.

DOE Field Offices, such as the Savannah River Site, will:

- establish and implement a site-wide waste management program which complements complex-wide programs and
- approve radioactive waste management bases for all radioactive waste management facilities, operations and activities.

The draft order and manual are now available for review and comment at the following locations:

- DOE Public Reading Room at the Gregg-Graniteville Library at the University of South Carolina-Aiken in Aiken, SC
- Thomas Cooper Library Government Documents at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, SC
- Reese Library at Augusta State University in Augusta, GA
- Asa H. Gordon Library at Savannah State University in Savannah, GA.

A meeting of the Savannah River Site's Citizens Advisory Board Environmental Restoration and Waste Management Subcommittee will be held at the Aiken Federal Building, 211 York Street, N.E., Aiken, SC at 6:00 p.m. on August 25, 1998. The revised draft order will be discussed at this meeting.

Comments must be received by September 8, 1998, to ensure consideration. Following a review, a final DOE Order and Manual, to be designated DOE O 435.1 and DOE M 435.1, will be developed and issued. Any comments received after this date will be considered to the extent practicable.

### for more information...

Electronic copies of the draft order and manual are also available on the Internet at: <http://www.explorer.doe.gov:1776/htmls/draft.html> under "Series 400 Work Process".

Additional information about the Department's Environmental Management program may also be obtained from the EM Home Page on the Internet at: <http://www.em.doe.gov>.

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## Record of Decision issued for hazardous waste

The Department of Energy recently issued the second Record of Decision (ROD) for the Waste Management (WM) Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). DOE has decided to continue to use off-site commercial facilities for treatment of major portions of the non-wastewater hazardous waste generated at DOE sites. The Savannah River Site and the Oak Ridge Reservation in Tennessee will treat some of their own non-wastewater hazardous waste on-site, where capacity is available in existing facilities and where this is economically favorable. This decision does not involve any transfers of non-wastewater hazardous waste among DOE sites.

The WM PEIS analyzed alternatives for the annual treatment of approximately 3,440 metric tons of non-wastewater hazardous waste that is currently being transported to commercial facilities for treatment. This ROD is based in part on analyses contained in the WM PEIS (DOE/EIS-0200-F). The final PEIS was published in May 1997. In January 1998 the Department published a ROD for the treatment and storage of its transuranic waste. The RODs for low-level radioactive waste, mixed low-level radioactive waste, and high-level radioactive waste will be issued later.

Hazardous waste, regulated under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), in a non-radioactive waste exhibiting the characteristics of ignitability, corrosivity, reactivity, or toxicity as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s regulations implementing RCRA, or waste that EPA has listed as hazardous waste under RCRA.

For more information write or call the Center for Environmental Management Information, P. O. Box 23769, Washington, DC 20026-3769 or 1-800-736-3282.

# Current NEPA actions affecting SRS

• **Rocky Flats Plutonium Residues and Scrub Alloy (DOE/EIS-0277)**, The final EIS is expected to be issued third quarter, 1998.

• **Accelerator for Production of Tritium (DOE/EIS-0270)**, The final EIS is delayed until a tritium production source is determined.

• **Tritium Extraction Facility (DOE/EIS-0271)**, The proposed action is to evaluate the impacts of constructing and operating a facility to extract tritium gas from targets irradiated in a commercial light water reactor or accelerator. The final EIS is delayed until a tritium production source is determined.

• **DOE Waste Management (DOE/EIS-0200)**, Multiple RODs will be issued. The TRU ROD was issued January 23, 1998 (63 FR 3629). Planned RODs are HWL Treatment, mid 1998, HLW storage, fall 1998, LLW/LLMW, end 1998.

• **SRS Spent Nuclear Fuel (DOE/EIS-0279)**, The EIS will evaluate alternative utilization strategies for existing, modified and new facilities or

processes for managing all aluminum-clad spent nuclear fuel assigned to SRS. The draft EIS is projected to be issued later this year.

• **Surplus Plutonium Disposition (DOE/EIS-0282)**, The draft EIS EPA NOI appeared in the Federal Register July 24, 1998 (63FR39866). The public meeting was held August 13 in the North Augusta Community Center, North Augusta S.C.

• **Wetland Mitigation Bank Program (DOE/EA-1205)**, Preparation of the draft EA is progressing with a proposed issue date of third quarter 1998.

• **A-01 Outfall Constructed Wetland Project (DOE/EA-1246)**, The predecisional draft EA was sent to S.C. and Ga. for review and comment on March 18, 1998. A decision (FONSI or EIS) is expected later this year.

• **CMP Pits (DOE/VIA-0001)**, The predecisional draft VIA was reviewed by DOE and WSRC. Environmental Restoration has incorporated the final VIA in the draft CERCLA Interim Action Proposed Plan.

## Need NEPA documents?

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## INFORMATION REPOSITORIES

\* DOE Public Reading Room, Gregg-Graniteville Library, USC-Aiken, Aiken, S.C. \* Thomas Cooper Library Government Documents Department, USC-Columbia, Columbia, S.C. \* Reese Library, Augusta State University, Augusta, Ga. \* Asa H. Gordon Library, Savannah State University, Savannah, Ga.

## INTERNET ACCESS

**SRS Home Page**, <http://www.srs.gov>

## RCRA Meeting Date Changed

The public meeting scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 15 at 3:00 at the Aiken County Library has been rescheduled for Monday, Sept. 14 at 3:00 at the Aiken County Public Library. Representatives from SRS and SCDHEC will be available to answer questions about proposed modifications to the site's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Part B Permit Renewal Application.

## Strong support shown for plutonium disposition missions

An estimated 1100 people attended the two meetings held recently by DOE on the surplus plutonium disposition missions environmental impact statement (EIS) at the North Augusta Community Center. Civic and business leaders, local elected officials, state and federal legislators and site employees voiced strong support for SRS as the location for all three plutonium disposition missions. SRS, along with the Pantex Plant in Amarillo, Texas, is DOE's preferred alternative for the pit disassembly and conversion facility.

It was reportedly the largest turnout ever at a public meeting on a DOE environmental impact statement.

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## *The SRS Environmental Bulletin*

**For more information on this or other  
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